

# BEEBIZ OCTOBER 2021

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

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Postal Address 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights, NSW 2480

## October Activity cancelled because of COVID

## November Activity Field Day and AGM in Lismore on 28<sup>th</sup> November

Details to follow in November Newsletter (AGM notice attached)

## Presidents Report

Hi! Folks,

Another month has passed with no gatherings possible due to the public health orders. Some restrictions have now been lifted but the committee decided not to have an October field day because of the fluidity of the situation. November looks good however, and if things pan out well we will have a field day incorporating the AGM.

The usual sausage sizzle, salad lunch will be free to all financial members as an incentive for everyone to attend. All positions will be declared vacant, so it is your opportunity to nominate office bearers for the forthcoming year. As I'm sure there will be many nominations for President, it's timely that I thank the Committee members for their ongoing support, and everyone who pitched in and helped at the few field days that were possible.

Happy beekeeping everyone.

Cheers Kevin Virgen

## Secretary Report

The Committee decided not to hold a field day in October because of the COVID pandemic. However, there will be a field day in November, with a free lunch followed by the AGM for 2020-2021. The field day will be focussed on examining hives.

Attached to this newsletter are the minutes of the last approved Committee meeting, and a meeting notice for the AGM. According to our constitution, the AGM should be held within 6 months of the end of the financial year, so we just make it.

## From The Hives

The hives at Rous have been moved out into the bush at Bungawalbyn. While at Rous, their number has been built back up to 32 by using nuclei from last summer, and swarms caught in the early Spring. Because the macadamias give beneficial pollen, and ample nectar, most of the hives are quite strong. The introduction of drawn combs into the brood box as well as adding up to three supers as required seems to

have suppressed the number of swarms down to one, which was caught. Of course, there may have been others which escaped the daily inspections, but it is still a good result.

The honey proved difficult to extract, due to the low water content and the low temperatures over Spring. Two combs busted when the speed of the extractor was (prematurely) ramped up.

Usually at Rous, the flowering of the macadamias is closely followed by the flowering of guoia, which the bees work strongly for a nice pale honey, but unfortunately with a disagreeable taste (called "crow ash" flavour). This year the guoia barely flowered, so honey was collected. Honey with a full guoia flavour is marked down by most of the honey packers because of the difficulty in blending the flavour out.

The hives were moved in two batches of 16. They were closed up in the predawn using foam strips using smoke to drive the bees inside. In the morning chill, the flow of warm air out at the ends of the entrances on to the hands was quite noticeable. The hives are moved closed in the morning rather than open in the evening as done by most professionals because it is safer unloading and moving manually in the daylight. It is so easy to trip over a twig at night.

At Bungawalbyn, there were flowering iron barks and white mahoganies, but the main flow usually come a little later from swamp box (*Lophostemon sauvoleans*). The second super has been added to most hives.

Brian

## **Flowering Report**

Things are still powering along. In spite of Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) not having been all that extensive a budding, it has continued on for an extraordinary time. Some is still flowering as I write. Grey Ironbark (*E paniculata*) is still yielding and will continue as it moves west. There is some nice flowering on White Mahogany (*E acmenoides*). It does not always yield nectar but on occasion can give a good flow. The Pollen is more than useful.

I see some tiny bud on one or two Bloodwood (*E Gummifera*). It rarely yields nectar, only once in my time properly. Again the pollen is most useful. It flowers sequentially from north to south. So some trees north of us may well be showing good sized bud now, and those further south none in evidence yet. All the Bloodwoods have the characteristic quality of stringing out if you put the finger or spoon in and withdraw slowly.

And now for something completely different. I am always commenting on the pollen quality of flora. After all pollen is what makes a bee. And quality pollen makes a quality bee.



Bees also help to make a quality fruit. Some fruits need bees to get a crop, almonds come to mind. They only need one pollen grain to produce the peach-like fruit. Other fruits need many seeds to be pollinated. In the case of apples five is the magic number to avoid a misshapen fruit. Zucchini- many, many, seeds need pollination. The pic shows the result when not enough were pollinated leading to the skinny bit at the end. Similar effects can occur with green cucumbers. Sometimes it is all to do with size. Blueberries don't need bees to set fruit but the more seeds that get a pollen grain the bigger the fruit. Similarly kiwi fruit, also known as Chinese gooseberries. The more seeds pollinated the bigger the fruit.

Blueberries are interesting in that bees cannot get pollen from the flower. Rather they stick their head into the flower and attempt to lick some of the nectar from the petal. In doing so their head comes into contact with the sexual parts of the flower. Bees don't find them attractive so need a goodly number of hives to do the job. Especially round here on the Red Soil as there is usually plenty of attractive forage outside the nets.  
Geoff

## **American Foul Brood**

There has been a report from the NSW ABA of AFB cases in the 2480 postcode. Members should be alert for the symptoms (look at the DPI website) when looking through brood boxes. Check any hives that are not expanding under the excellent conditions. October is the month recommended for all beekeepers to check the health of their brood.

## **Toad Alert**

Cane toads are hopping about on the North Coast now the weather has warmed up. Hives should be on a stand to make sure that they cannot eat the beekeeper's workforce at a very convenient buffet. Of course, they will continue to eat the dead and dying bees on the ground in front of the hive, which could be beneficial.

It is worth a trip out at night with a torch.



## **What to Do if Your Hive Swarms**

Swarms are the natural way that bees increase their numbers, and while they can be reduced by the beekeeper they cannot be stopped. A main cause of swarming is crowding in the brood box, minimised by having enough supers on the hive. In an ideal world, the beekeeper would catch the swarm to increase hive numbers, but they are often lost.

The mother hive is now in danger of dying out through a number of processes, and steps should be taken to reduce the chances of this occurring.

### **Reduce Hive Volume**

Because the swarm can take well over half the bees in the hive, it is possible that the remaining bees are not sufficient to protect the colony from small hive beetle attack. A hive that you think or know may have swarmed should be inspected, and supers removed to increase the bee density on the frames. In fact, in most cases, the hive can be reduced to just the brood box. Also all SHB traps should be operating correctly.

### **Queen Laying Checks**

When a hive swarms, the colony left behind has to end up with a new correctly-mated queen to survive. The beekeeper has to follow this process carefully, for if the colony does not end up queenright, it will die out, with a limited opportunity to save it.

The virgin queen produced by the hive has to go on a mating flight where she mates on the wing with up to 50 drones in drone congregation areas, and then she has to get back to the hive. Beekeepers producing mated queens have a good idea what percentage of queens survive this trip; the generally accepted number is 80%. Some are taken by birds, some return to the apiary and enter the wrong hive, where they are killed.

Bees have evolved in an environment where their wild hive would not be near other hives. The queen has to return only to the vicinity of her hive where pheromones will guide her in. In the managed apiaries of many hives, it is not surprising that the queen can be confused. The situation is made worse by having identical hives set up in repetitive arrays as in most managed apiaries. (*It is very hard not to align everything neatly.*)

There are reports that higher rates of returns than 80% can be achieved by marking the front of the hive, providing objects near the hive. and pointing the hives in different directions.

It is essential to determine if the new queen has returned from her mating flight safely. If there is not a mated queen, the hive will transition into the laying worker stage, from which it is difficult to recover, and eventually die out. The best way to check if the hive is queen right is to look for worker eggs in the hive. Fertilised eggs laid by a queen are in the middle at the base of the worker cell; eggs laid by a laying worker are usually towards or on the side of the cell, and there are often multiple eggs in the cell.

When should you look? Assume the old queen lays worker eggs on day 1, the hive swarms on day 1 (when the queen cell is capped), and the virgin queen thus hatches on day 7. There will be capped worker brood up until day 21 and probably drone brood up until day 24. The virgin queen will take up to 4 days running around inside the hive, and another 4 days to make her mating flight and start laying. The hive should be carefully inspected for new worker eggs on day 15 after the swarm left; there may be a large number of eggs by then, or only a small patch on a single frame, as the times are only approximate. There should still be capped worker brood in the hive.

Check again a week later, when all the capped worker brood should be hatched. Action should be taken if worker eggs cannot be found; a frame with eggs from another hive should be put into the hive if available. This delays the onset of workers starting to lay, and the hive should draw new queen cells if there is not a queen.

Brian

## **Beginner Lessons**

Remember that the club is still offering to give beginners an introductory session on a beehive to get them started. Contact the secretary, or a helpful member near you.

## **Volunteers**

The club requires more members to volunteer for committee roles, and to hold meetings in 2022.

## **List of Helpful Members**

Kevin Virgen	Federal	6684 9213	Brian Window	Lismore	0466 790 736
Ray Smith	McKees Hill	0427 734 954	Paul Towner	Rous Mill	0418 321 305
Geoff Manning	Bentley	0400 221 602	John Bull	North Casino	0414 842 903
David Fairhall	Richmond Hill	0444 513 771			

## **Services Directory**

Summary of available products and services

### NRABA Members

David Fairhall( queen cells, mated queens, nuclei) (Lismore) 0444 513 771

Brian Window (nuclei) (Lismore) 0466 790 736

Geoff Manning (hives) (Bentley) 0400 221 602

Ray Smith (nuclei) (Lismore) 0427 734 954

### Not NRABA Members

Stephen Fowler ( nuclei, hives, all sorts of bee equipment, buys wax) (Alstonville) 0418 412 621

Merv McDonald (nuclei, hives, hive care)(Alstonville) 0439 166 016

Rob Stone (mated queens, nuclei)(Casino) 0487 598 105

Ross Wood (mated queens, nuclei)(Grafton) 0421 817 710

Correction and additions welcome

## MINUTES NRABA COMMITTEE July 8th 2021

Time 3.00 pm Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights

- Members present KV, GM, BW
- Apologies
- Minutes of Committee meeting June 10th 2021 (m BW s GM passed)
- Matters Arising

BW had been refunded money owed.

BW had welcomed Shane Odea

- Correspondence
- Reports

-Treasurer

June field day Expenses Sausages \$45 Groceries \$28.39

Income meals \$20. Raffle \$24 sale embedder \$16

-Editor BW proposed to get notice of meetings on the ABC and the local free newspapers

-Membership

Full John Millard, Nathalie James, Lenneke Serjeant, Elizabeth Essey

(approved m BW s GM passed)

Agenda Business Items

(1) Field Day June 27<sup>th</sup> attendance affected by lockdown

(2) Field day July 25<sup>th</sup> cancelled

- General Business

-It was decided to cancel the next committee meeting in August

-BW accepted the treasurer role.

-BW and KV to send a thankyou letter to Flowhive

-BW and GM to offer personal tuition to new beekeepers

- Next Meeting

Time 3.00pm Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road Lismore Heights

Meeting closed 3.36pm

# **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021**

Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Incorporated

Time 1pm November 28<sup>th</sup> 2021    Place 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights

## Agenda

- Apologies
- Minutes 2020 AGM
- Matters Arising
- Presidents Report
- Secretary Report
- Treasurer Report
- (Other Business must be sent to the secretary)
- Election of Office Bearers
- Election of Committee members

## **Nomination of Candidates**

Nominations should be made in writing, signed by two members and endorsed by the candidate, delivered to the secretary at least 7 days in advance of the AGM. In the event of insufficient nominations, nominated candidates are taken to be elected, and further nominations are to be received at the AGM.